

The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



FEBRUARY, 1946 VOL. XII, NO. 8
edited by PETER HUGH REED
TWENTY-FIVE CENTS



SYMPHONY No. 4 GUSTAV MAHLER

Bruno Walter, conducting the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, has made for Columbia a first recording of the Fourth Symphony of Gustav Mahler. A close friend and disciple of the composer, Bruno Walter is the best possible choice for bringing to records this wonderful musical picture of a child's conception of heaven.

MAHLER: SYMPHONY NO. 4 in G Major
Bruno Walter conducting the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, with Desi Halban, soprano.
Set M-MM-589 • \$6.50 (exclusive of taxes)

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Some Aspects of Recording

An Editorial

The year 1945 saw the record companies emerging from one of the darkest eras in the history of the business: the period of the recording ban, imposed by the Musicians' Union, and the period of war-time and labor shortages. When we look back over this past year, we realize that the domestic companies have made tremendous strides, particularly when we take into consideration the prevailing shortage of material, the increased costs, and the need to work with machinery which, if damaged, could not be immediately replaced. Shellac, which is an important component part of the record, has increased in cost to two and a half times its pre-war price. It comes from the Far East, and more particularly from India, where the finest lac is produced. A shortage still prevails despite the fact that the war is over and India is now able to supply the world with this valued product. The record industry, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, prior to the war absorbed sixty per cent of the output of shellac. It is our belief that the percentage may have increased since the E.B. survey. Before the war, one American recording official placed the figure used in this country at thirty per cent, but from the look of things today we suspect that that will be ex-

ceeded as time goes on. There is no question of a doubt that the record business in America is far greater than in any other country.

Since the end of the war, and indeed long before, the record companies have been using more shellac in their record dough. A silent, or relatively silent, surface is assured when sufficient shellac is used. Though the exact composition of any specific phonograph record dough is a closely guarded secret, the general principles are known and the percentage of shellac in the dough of domestic Columbia, Victor, English Columbia, English Decca (not the domestic concern), and H.M.V. (Victor's English cousin) is generally conceded to be approximately the same. The European companies, like Teletunken, Polydor, Cetra, Fonit, etc. all used a generous amount of this product in their records, even during the war, owing, of course, to the fact that Germany took over the major portion of shellac on hand from all record companies in occupied countries. French records issued during the war, suffered considerably from a shortage of this product in the dough. Some of these we heard were good, but with a high surface noise, and others were decidedly bad, with almost gravelly surfaces.

In the old days, the amount of shellac used

Our post-war, two-color cover was designed for us by Mr. James Flora, an artist whose work is well known and justly admired in the record field.

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* Published monthly, *The American Record Guide* sells at twenty-five cents a copy or \$2.50 annually in the U.S.A. Yearly subscription \$2.75 in Canada and all foreign countries.

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Reentered as second class matter November 7, 1944, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

in the record dough ran as high as 27 per cent. Sometimes there was less and a small percentage of Copal Gum or cheaper lac was used to make up the deficiency. When the price of lac rises, we have been told by one official of the record world, the companies economize and reduce the amount of that constituent. We have been informed that one of the larger record companies in this country prior to the war economized on shellac by using vinylite in the dough. One might suppose that the domestic companies are not using shellac as plentifully now as in the past, but in the cases of Victor and Columbia the improvement in record surfaces would seem to indicate that they are, and if not to the amount of former times then a substitute has been added. Most of the cheaper brands of recordings definitely do not contain enough shellac, for the record surfaces are inferior and frequently too noisy. Decca has never used enough lac or its equivalent, in our estimation, though this may account for the comparatively low prices of its records. When this company, before the war, took over the catalogues of several European concerns and put out a series of "classical records", the materials used in many of them were so poor and probably so deficient in shellac content that if we had not known many of these recordings from an original European pressing, we should have been inclined to claim the reproduction was poor and often distorted.

Columbia, using a laminated surface, can perhaps utilize a higher amount of shellac in its records, because the part of the record that uses shellac is only a shell, separated by black paper of a tissue thinness from the rest of the record, which can be made of a coarser material; in the process employed by Victor, Decca and sundry other companies, the whole disc is made up of a more or less homogeneous mixture. The laminated surface has its disadvantages, in our estimation, but among its decided advantages is a very quiet surface. A disadvantage, as we see it, would seem to be the inability to get as much music on a single face as can be got on a solid-stock disc. One of the foremost recording engineers, H. Courtney Bryson, in his book *The Gramophone Record* (Ernest Benn, Ltd., London, 1935), has said of the laminated record that though it is not unbreakable, "it is possible to make the sur-

face intensely hard and therefore very smooth and resistant to wear"; however, once "wear commences, it is very rapid, as the veneer, when punctured, quickly disintegrates". Remarkable upon the fact that the English Columbia concern abandoned the laminated process in 1931, Mr. Bryson says it was regrettable, since these records "though much more difficult to manufacture than the ordinary solid stock records", offered a finished product that was "superior to any other commercial record". This, of course, was written in 1935; since then HMV and Victor have shown with their solid stock that they can produce a record that is equally as fine.

The quality of record surfaces in the past year, although showing a great improvement over 1944, has nonetheless varied considerably. We are of the opinion, however, that many complaints against modern recordings really arise from defects in the equipment of the listener. Mr. Lanier, in our January issue, had something to say about renovating one's old equipment which we believe a lot of people should take to heart. We have traced specific complaints about certain recordings to deficiencies in the complainant's machine. All the grievances were against modern sets, in which the dynamics are considerably more powerful than in former times. In one case, we suggested a new crystal cartridge and the records that formerly did not sound well were found completely satisfactory after a new cartridge was installed. In several other cases, a faulty motor was the true cause of a great deal of distortion attributed to recordings. Often the complainant was using a needle which did not serve his purposes to advantage and in several cases we found that complainants were using a pickup with a built-in point which was decidedly worn and hence producing distortion. A built-in needle is not usable any longer than an interchangeable one, and often it is less good because it is not as fine a jewel point as some of the interchangeable types. Often its point-radius is disadvantageous to some record grooves. It is an incontrovertible fact that 99 per cent of the recordings manufactured are free of distortion, if not of surface blemishes. If distortion is heard from these records, the fault lies in the reproducing equipment.

Several readers seem to feel that our re-

—————(Continued on page 167)



RECORDS AND

THE YEAR 1945

Looking back over 1945, we would rate the two most important releases of the year as Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, for harpsichord, in the inimitable performance of Wanda Landowska (Victor set 1022), and Prokofiev's inspired cantata, *Alexander Nevsky*, performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy, with Jennie Tourel (mezzo-soprano) and the Westminster Choir (Columbia set 580). Most certainly, there were other outstanding issues but these two stand out above the year's output like the spires of a great cathedral. Since our readers have welcomed in the past a brief editorial summary of the year's record releases, we will look back over 1945's record production and discuss it briefly.

January was a meagre month; save for a Chaliapin disc—*Mad Scene of the Miller* from Dargomizhsky's *Roussalka* (Victor 11-8695), which was of no great musical interest but valued for the interpretative artistry of the noted basso—there was nothing of consequence.

February brought us the Budapest String Quartet's splendid performance of Beetho-

ven's *C minor Quartet, Op. 18, No. 4* (Columbia set 556). No previous recording of this work offers so arresting an account of the music as we find here. An album of *Songs and Spirituals*, sung by Marian Anderson (Victor set 986), unfortunately placed the accent on commercial rather than musical values; one disc, however, containing three Spirituals, deserves, in our estimation, to be included in everyman's library. Vocally at her best in this song recital, Miss Anderson proved, if nothing else, that she was a versatile artist.

The first orchestral recordings made after the ban was lifted were issued in March. These, Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*, played by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Columbia set 557), and the *Pathétique Symphony* in a performance by Rodzinski and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra (Columbia set 558), were disappointing to us both from the interpretative and the reproductive aspects. Victor threw the spotlight on Horowitz and Toscanini by reissuing their performance of Brahms' *Second Piano Concerto* (set 740), a perform-

ance which although admirable from the standpoint of execution, still remains a source of controversy among musicians as well as record buyers.

April brought us the first complete recording of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, in an arresting performance by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the gifted William Primrose as solo violist (Victor set 989). We would not quarrel with those who contend that this performance could be bettered; Toscanini has given a more discerningly paced and poetically searching reading of this music. However, Koussevitzky's performances of Berlioz are appreciable for their vitality and exploitation of tonal color, and his reading of *Harold in Italy* has much to commend it. Certainly Mr. Primrose is an asset to it. Moreover, the naturalness of the orchestral sound in the reproduction is something that all listeners appreciate. We were glad to call attention in April to two sets of folk material issued by Asch Records—*American Folksay* (set 432) and *Blues* (set 550), since both are unusual contributions to their field.

MAY RELEASES

May saw the release of Ormandy's performance of the Brahms *Fourth Symphony* (Columbia set 567). Here the recording was a marked improvement over the Beethoven *Seventh* and the conductor's feeling for the music more in evidence. We still think that no conductor on records has played the Scherzo more convincingly than Ormandy, and though the accelerando at the end of the first movement is not indicated in the score, we must admit it is exciting—a bit like a shot of adrenalin, as our friend Fassett says. The Bruno Walter performance of Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* (Columbia set 565) seemed gaunt reproductively, but the conductor gave a good performance; the *Jupiter* is one symphony we hope Toscanini will record someday, since his performance is unmatched, in our estimation, by any other living conductor. Stravinsky's *Scènes de Ballet* (Columbia set X245), despite fine recording and authoritative performance, was musically disappointing, too much of a hybrid for its own good. However, there is a lesson in orchestrating to be learned from the famous Igor.

The long-wished-for re-recording of

Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe—Suite No. 2* by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony was issued in June (Victor set SP-1). Housed in paper binding, most attractively decorated, this recording deserved a more durable album; complaints about breakage in the so-called Show Piece Albums of Victor are constantly coming our way but we daresay that these display pieces sell more records than some of the regular albums. The recording of this work although a major improvement over the older one, made in 1929, nonetheless revealed that recording technique has not yet reached the point where it can do full justice to the infinite subtleties that a score of this kind requires. Columbia's new recording of Rachmaninoff's *Second Symphony* (set 569) was praiseworthy for the naturalness in orchestral sound. Rodzinski proved himself a persuasive spokesman for the composer, giving his mournful, rhapsodic music a straightforward, cleanly etched reading. Nathan Milstein's performance of the popular Lalo *Symphonie Espagnole* (Columbia set 564) was admired for the violinist's musical integrity and suavity of tone, and Victor's set of Leonard Bernstein's *Songs and Ballet Music* from the Broadway hit *On the Town* (album 995) proved one of the most appealing releases of its kind ever issued. As musical show tunes go, Mr. Bernstein's rank high and seem more enduring than most, despite some echo of Gershwin. And his ballet music reveals a marked talent in this field. It is only fair to state that subsequent rehearsals of Risë Stevens' album of *Kern Songs* (Columbia set 568) have proved them more appreciable than our reviewer would have led us to believe, and even he is willing to concede that the mezzo-soprano's transition of style reveals a praiseworthy versatility. Moreover, the singer has the advantage of an orchestral director, Sylvan Shulman, who provides her with admirably vital support.

THE TWO BORIS SETS

Of the two albums of excerpts from Musorgsky's *Boris Godounoff*, issued by Victor (set 1000) in June, and by Columbia (set 563) in July, the former, featuring Alexander Kipnis as Boris, singing in the original Russian, is preferable to the latter featuring Ezio Pinza, singing in Italian. Kipnis gives a more searching and tonally eloquent per-

formance of the music, and though some Russians of our acquaintance contend that Kipnis has an accent, we still feel that the sound of this language serves Mussorgsky's music better than the Italian tongue. Pinza is splendid in several scenes, notably the *Death Scene*, but on the whole it is all too apparent that the music lies too high for his voice.

Ormandy's recording of Debussy's Two Nocturnes, *Nuages* and *Fêles* (Columbia set X-247), issued in July, showed rare understanding of the impressionistic qualities of this music, whose delicacy and reserve are not always so well exploited. Toscanini's new recording of the *Lohengrin Prelude* (Victor set 11-8807) brought us the finest performance to date of this music on records. Conversely, José Iturbi's reading of Chopin's *Polonaise in A flat, Opus 53* (Victor disc 11-8848) brought us some of the worst Chopin playing on records, and revealed that the pianist, since "going Hollywood", no longer plays as he formerly did. It was our pleasure to call attention to a set of guitar solos of Spanish music in July, played by that incomparable artist Andres Segovia (Decca set A-384). It has been a source of considerable pleasure to us since we first acquired it, but we still wish Victor would give us some better recorded selections by this amazingly gifted man. Miss Jennie Tourel's record debut in *Brazilian Serenades* by Villa-Lobos (Columbia set X-249) is an album with which we would not willingly part; the music is richly colorful and rhythmically intriguing, and Miss Tourel proves herself one of the rare singers in a day and age of poorly trained vocalists.

AUGUST RELEASES

August threw the spotlight on George Gershwin. Of the several sets of his music issued, Oscar Levant's performance of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Columbia set X-251), was the one designed to hit the jackpot. Levant's sympathetic and understanding performances of Gershwin's music has placed his interpretations quite apart from all others, and although we still have a spot of affection for the streamlined Sanroma-Fiedler performance, we must admit that Levant is closer to the heart of the composer. Fritz Reiner's performance of Bennett's inflated

potpourri of music from Gershwin's opera, *Porgy and Bess* (Columbia set 572), appealed to us much more than Sevitzy's performance of this music (Victor set 999—issued in July), but we still think this score too long and not as appealing as Decca's recordings of the operatic excerpts. Artur Rubinstein's performance of Franck's *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* (Victor set 1104) was admired for performance and recording, but like many others we find Franck a composer to whom we turn less and less as time goes on. The gifted American mezzo-soprano, Blanche Thebom, made her debut on records in August, singing Brahms's *Cradle Song* and Reger's *The Virgin's Slumber Song* (Victor disc 10-1173), in better than average English translations. Her richly endowed voice is one which ever pleases in repeated performances, and it is to be hoped she will be represented in time with a large list of recordings.

SEPTEMBER RELEASES

In September, Columbia released a singularly lovely vocalise by the Brazilian composer, Villa-Lobos—his *Bachianas Brasileiras, No. 5—Cantilena* (disc 71670-D), well sung by Bidu Sayao. There is a haunting quality of beauty to this music and few that have heard it have not been captivated by its unusual charm. Bruno Walter's fine performance of the *First Symphony* by the American Samuel Barber (Columbia set X-252) has been a widely appreciated recording, and deservedly so, for this symphony is a well written and unusually expressive work from one of our most valued and easily understood composers. Helen Traubel's excerpts from *Tristan and Isolde* (Columbia set 573) revealed a great voice more often abused than not—the hardness of her upper voice did not appeal to us, but her musical intelligence was noted. Koussevitzky's rendition of Brahms' romantic *Third Symphony* (Victor set 1007) was enjoyed for the naturalness of the recording and the expressive interpretation, more persuasive in our estimation in the outer than the inner movements; on the whole a valued version of this work. Vladimir Golschmann's eloquent and tonally rich performance of Schoenberg's early Wagner-influenced opus—*Verklärte Nacht* (Victor set 1005) must have pleased all admirers of this score, since it was a better

played and more understanding interpretation than a previous version. The performance of Bach's *Concerto in D minor* by Adolf Busch and Frances Magnes (Columbia set X-253) was stylistically more cogent than any previous version, but tonally it was not always pleasing—Busch's tone is often thin and brittle and frequently irritating. The Szigeti-Flesch version (Columbia set 418) remains our choice for this concerto in a recording.

In October came the first plastic recording by Victor, at an increased price—Koussevitzky's performance of Strauss' tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel* (set DV-1), a vital and exciting exposition of this music though some critics consider it dramatically exaggerated. This month also brought us Virgil Thomson's *Five Portraits*, a skillfully scored work which proves singularly disappointing on repeated hearings. Milstein's rendition of the popular Mendelssohn *Concerto* (Columbia 577) was tonally and technically to be admired, but one suspects his tense playing will prove more disconcerting than pleasing in repeated hearings. Szigeti's performance (Columbia set 190), despite its age, remains our choice in recordings of this work. Martial Singher's album of *French Operatic Arias* (Columbia set 578) revealed a singularly gifted artist whose work although admirable did not always sustain interest. The American soprano, Eleanor Steber, voicing the arias of the Countess from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* (Victor disc 11-8850) was deservedly praised for her fine musicianship. On second thought, or rather a subsequent re-hearing, we agree with those who feel that Patricia Munsel would have been wiser had she not permitted Victor to release her recording of the *Polonaise* from *Mignon* and the *Aria of the queen* from *Le Coq d'or* (Victor disc 11-8886). Only in the latter excerpt does she stand up to the singers of the past, but even there she lacks the vocal certainty and tonal beauty required to make her singing enduringly appealing. Herbert Janssen's recording of the ubiquitous *Evening Star Song* from Wagner's *Tannhauser* (Columbia disc

71697-D) showed him as one of the most persuasive living interpreters of the role of Wolfram; he made us forget for the moment that we had grown tired of this selection.

In November came the Ormandy performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (Columbia set 591), a meticulous reading but hardly an exhaustive or truly arresting account of this great score. The Beecham recording of Schubert's *Sixth Symphony* (Victor set 1014) proved to be a finely played performance of a decidedly second-rate work, and Claudio Arrau's rendition of the Schumann *Piano Concerto* (Victor set 1009) did not efface Myra Hess' version for us except in the final movement which revealed a truer understanding of the composer's marking. "Dashing" is the word for Artur Schnabel's rendition of Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata* (Victor set 1018). November brought us also the first of a new series of operatic recordings by Victor which from the reproductive aspect are highly praiseworthy; one wishes that all the singing had been on a par. Out of all the records issued, Blanche Thebom's beautifully sung *Brangäne's Warning* from *Tristan and Isolde* (Victor disc 11-8928) remains the most rewarding offering. Columbia's set of the third act from Wagner's *Die Walküre* (album 581) had the distinction of the conductor emerging as star performer rather than the soloists—Rodzinski's work in this album remains to us the finest he has done on records to date. It should be observed however, that Mme. Traubel and Mr. Janssen, while not without their faults, nevertheless bring many admirable elements to their interpretations. November also brought us the splendid recording of Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* (Columbia set 580).

December is too close upon us to re-review its releases. The two great sets of the month were Landowska's performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (Victor 1022) and the Budapest-Katims performance of Mozart's *Quintet in C major* (Columbia 586). No one who calls himself a true music lover should neglect adding these rewarding musical works to his record collection.

Thomas B. Lambert



THE CELLULOID RECORD

By Angus Joss

To a struggling genius, practically unknown, must be given the honor of first developing a practical, indestructible celluloid record, the forerunner of the modern plastic disc. This was Thomas B. Lambert, who was born on December 4, 1864, of English parentage at Wellington, Ohio. Lambert completed his grade and high school education in his home town and later graduated from Cornell University. It was in May 1892 in Chicago that Lambert began his work on the celluloid record. Cognizant of the fragility and transient nature of the wax cylinder record then in vogue, he conceived the idea of producing a celluloid cylinder record pressed from a matrix of an original or master wax record. In his spare time, he experimented with electroplating wax records, an occupation which at that time was engaging the minds of a number of other experimenters and inventors, including Thomas Edison. Lambert's first efforts to produce self-sustaining records were somewhat crude products owing to the fact that

his impoverished condition did not permit him to carry on in any other way; by this time he had a wife and child to support on very low wages.

How Lambert produced a celluloid cylinder from a matrix is perhaps best told in his own words. "This phonogram was made in the matrix," he has told us, "by first forming a ring of thin red celluloid and also a ring of heavier white celluloid of a different character. These were made so that the red ring would exactly fit in the outside of the white ring. The composite ring was then submitted for a short time to the action of a solvent of celluloid. A short time after the application of the solvent the ring, being softened by the application of said solvent, was placed within the matrix and an outward pressure given to it by means of a rubber plug; and it was caused to expand by applying a screw pressure to its axes so as to squeeze it longitudinally and expand it radially. After remaining under pressure a short time and in contact with the interior surface

of the matrix, the pressure on the rubber was removed and the record taken from the matrix by a longitudinal movement."

The duplicate records thus formed were tested and compared to the original by an ingenious method too complicated to explain here and also played on the phonographs of that time. Unfortunately, he never saved any of the first products of 1893.

In 1894, Young, and in 1898, Lioret took out British patents for their celluloid records made from matrices. Their records were of no practical value, being collapsible films not capable of being played without difficult reinforcement to make them self-sustainable. Edison some years later stated that he had produced a celluloid cylinder record in 1889, using matrices which he formed for the purpose of producing wax duplicates for mechanical duplication or dubbing, but it is difficult to believe this statement since no tangible evidence was offered in substantiation, nor would the process he used for duplicating wax records be conducive to pressing a tough tube of celluloid that was self-sustainable.

Lambert demonstrated his process in October 1897, but financial difficulties prevented him from using more effective means for the manufacture of duplicates. Such people as he had approached with the intention of interesting them in celluloid records for advertising purposes, simply dismissed the subject without being shown a sample or hearing an explanation of the process.

In the summer of 1899, Lambert met Albert Philpot, who agreed to aid him financially in establishing an indestructible-record factory. An improved method of manufacturing standard and concert records using heat and pressure was evolved by Lambert before that year, so he now filed for patents. William Messer, an assistant, helped develop the record presser or printing machine, which used steam at 40 pounds pressure and compressed air at 100 pounds pressure to the square inch respectively in forming the impressions on the cylinder.

A rival company, the Indestructible Phonograph Record Co., with Edmund A. Balm and Varian M. Harris, proprietors, sprang up in Chicago in 1900. There seems to be not one record existent today that was produced by that ill-fated firm.

Clouds loomed on the horizon for the newly founded Lambert Co. when its presi-

dent became involved in an interference suit pressed by the National Phonograph Co. on a patent filed by Edison over a year before Lambert, on forming matrices and producing duplicates. After the decision was awarded to Edison, local court action by the same company followed in 1902, crippling the operation of the Lambert Co. and eventually forcing it out of business in 1905. The means used by the National Phonograph Co. to rout the two Chicago competitors from the field reflects small credit on that company. Possibly up to 75,000 records were manufactured and sold by the Lambert Co. before abandonment.

Lambert accepted employment with the Chicago Telephone Co. and continued with them until his death on January 9, 1928. He maintained for many years a laboratory where he met and solved many problems but never achieved financial independence from his indefatigable experimenting. The highest honor which his fellowmen granted him in later life was the 33rd Masonic Degree.

Meanwhile more patents for indestructible records were issued to George H. Stevens of Toledo, Ohio, and to Ademor N. Petit of Newark, New Jersey, the latter assigned to the International Phonograph and Indestructible Record Co., Ltd. of Liverpool, England. Whether that company ever functioned is unknown to the writer. In 1906, more patents were issued to Varian M. Harris, one of the ex-proprietors of the Indestructible Phonograph Record Co. of Chicago. These utilized a thin film of celluloid mounted on a filler of wax-impregnated wood pulp. The same year saw the production of a single-faced disc record of celluloid backed by cardboard and a cloth netting, called the Marconi Velvetone. This disc was manufactured by Columbia for a short time but owing to a dispute with the inventor it was discontinued.

Brian Philpot, brother of Albert, succeeded in interesting eastern capitalists in the Lambert patents, and in 1907, the Indestructible Phonographic Record Co. was formed by Snowden Brothers and McSweeney in Albany, New York. Although the patents were sold, Lambert did not receive a cent from that sale, nor a royalty on the records produced. The new company improved the product by inserting a spiral wound paper tube with gun-metalled ends into the cellu-

loid shell. The National Phonograph Co. attempted to outwit this new competitor by various means. They denounced the celluloid record as "scientifically, musically and commercially impossible" and complained that the records ruined the points of Edison reproducers. The Albany concern reacted to the later charge by placing a diamond point reproducer on the market and to them belongs the credit of selling the first commercial diamond-point reproducers.

Columbia, seeing a chance to destroy its hated rival, agreed to dispose of the entire factory output of celluloid records made under their label. The contract was revoked within two years, 1911, when Columbia failed in its purpose. Another outlet was found for celluloid records through Sears, Roebuck and Co., Charles Williams Stores and direct mail service.

The cylinder record was fast losing ground to the disc when another celluloid cylinder record made its debut in 1910. This was manufactured by the U. S. Phonograph Co. under the Harris patents and was called the "U.S. Everlasting". Several models of phonographs were made by the U.S. concern; this new competitor, as a matter of fact, made both two- and four-minute cylinders. These were sold by Montgomery Ward Co. and U. S. Phonograph Co. dealers.

The wax record or cylinder was slowly driven from the market, for the new Amberol record, invented by Edison, proved to be a failure and was suddenly replaced in November 1912 by the Blue Amberol record, a celluloid product with a plaster of paris filler. Many old wax releases were re-pressed in celluloid for a long period of years. Brian Philpot had left the Albany company after serving as general manager for about two years and turned over the details of the Lambert process to the National Phonograph Co., which was later known as Thomas A. Edison, Inc. Edison's surprise action

brought forth the following comment from the Albany concern: "The same critics are offering for sale an 'unbreakable record', which is really a copy, as near as they can make it, of our Indestructible record, the very cylinder they so heartily denounced, not so long ago. But Imitation is the sincerest flattery and we shall continue to lead while the others follow."

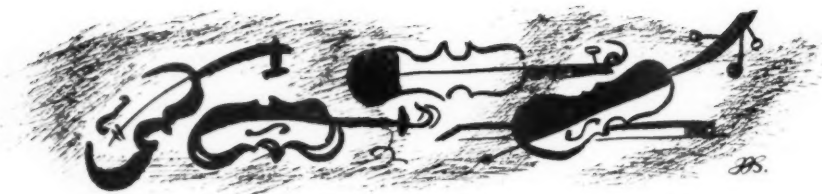
The next victim of the Edison Co. was the U.S. Phonograph Co., which after hearing threats from the former about suit for infringement, quietly abandoned production in 1913.

Edison, meanwhile, was in serious trouble. The factory output could not begin to supply the demand and after releasing a large number of records which were not properly cured and rapidly wore out, that demand began to decline. A disastrous fire in 1914 followed which impaired both cylinder and disc business.

The Indestructible Phonographic Record Co. changed its name to Federal Record Corp., continuing to manufacture cylinders and later, in 1918, a shellac disc, until its plant was entirely destroyed by fire in October 1922. This left only Edison in the cylinder field. The radio craze which struck the country cut deeply into the profits. Cylinder records began to diminish in quality in the late Twenties, and then came the announcement that after September 30, 1929, no more Blue Amberol records would be sold for amusement purposes, in spite of the fact that machines were sold up until the end by mail orders, factory direct. And thus ended the celluloid record after the promise that Edison was in the phonograph and record business for good.

To this date, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no other record has been devised that will endure 5800 playings, that is unaffected by any climate and is practically indestructible in ordinary use.





A SURVEY OF CHAMBER MUSIC

By Peter Hugh Reed

JOSEPH HAYDN

The quartets of Opus 33 (dating from 1781) are, says Cecil Gray, "among the most popular of Haydn's quartets, and justly so. They all take rank among the finest creations of his middle period . . ." Opus 33, being dedicated to the Russian Grand Duke Paul, is sometimes called the "Russian Quartets", and also *Gli Scherzi* because Haydn titles all his second movements scherzo or scherzando. Tovey calls these quartets "the lightest of all Haydn's mature comedies". Their general good cheer makes for delightful listening, yet at least three of the group—the first in *B minor*, the fourth in *B flat major* and the fifth in *G major*—lack sustaining interest. These have not been recorded.

The *E flat major*, Opus 33, No. 2 (performed by the Pro Arte's) has been given the sobriquet *The Joke*, because of the "capricious and humorous nature of its final movement". The nickname, however, seems rather inadequate to me, for it can only be applied to one movement, which in no way is typical of the quartet as a whole. The opening movement is curiously marked *Allegro moderato*, cantabile. Its songful character-

istics are not, however, of a sentimental sort. The first subject, which possesses marked strength and grace, dominates the movement. There is a certain austerity in the scherzo that follows, which is relieved only in part by its graceful trio section. The Largo begins with a duet between viola and cello; the inner sections of this movement are strangely marked by passages of intensity. The finale is completely carefree and, of course, of a jocular nature. The Pro Arte's, however, do not fully realize its humorous connotations.

The *Quartet in C major*, Opus 33, No. 3 (nicknamed *The Bird*, because of various recognized bird-like effects in the music) has long been the most widely played of the group. The opening movement has considerable thematic material that reminds one of twittering birds. Whether or not the initial theme is "the song of the nightingale", to which it has been likened, can best be decided by those who are more familiar than I with this bird. My own experience with nightingales, heard in some enchanting scenes in Italy, gave me the feeling that poets exaggerated their abilities as singers. They were, to say the least, shrill warblers. The

craftsmanship of the opening movement shows imagination and ingenuity; this is not an easy movement to play, since it requires a certain conscientiousness as well as spontaneity. Both the Pro Arte Quartet and the Roth Quartet (latter—Columbia set 257) tend to refine this movement too much. Indeed, their performances of the whole quartet suffer from over-refinement. The playing of the Roth's is preferable, in my estimation, since it is on the whole better reproduced. The Scherzando is most effectively contrasted. The Trio is more sprightly than the opening section, perhaps because it imitates the birds. This Trio, a duo between the first and second violins alone, might be termed a chirping chorus. The slow movement is tonal poetry of static rather than dynamic beauty. In form, it is a theme, 29 bars in length, with altered repetitions and decorations. It is virtually a long solo for the first violin. I prefer Roth's playing of this to Onnou's (Pro Arte). The last movement is not easy to perform; amateurs will have to work hard to get the requisite dash. Here, we have one of the finest examples of Haydn's humorous imagination and of his native sprightliness and joviality. Its style is said to be patterned on that of a Slavonic dance called the Kolo. The interval of the falling third at the beginning recalls the cuckoo; this motive is consistently reiterated throughout the entire movement. One wonders whether Haydn sought to capture a spring mood experienced in his garden pavilion.

DELIGHTFUL MELODIES

The *D major Quartet, Opus 33, No. 6* (recorded by the Pro Arte Quartet) is full of delightful melodies throughout. This work, the shortest of the six, sustains the interest of listeners and players. Even the unpretentious slow movement, which Tovey claims needs a cadenza at the end, has an irresistible charm. The variation finale is well made and ingeniously accomplished.

The isolated *Quartet in D minor, Opus 42*, dates from 1785. Its interest is chiefly historical. Tovey speaks of new treatment of the sonata form, and unquestionably the opening movement holds the most interest. The rest of the quartet has puzzled many because of its "astonishing terseness". It is not recorded.

The six quartets of Opus 50 date from around 1786. Gray says the works may have been written over a period of three years—1784-1787. In these works we find the composer firmly seated in the saddle; the set is dedicated to Frederick William the Second, King of Prussia, who was said to have been an able quartet cellist. Two examples of this set are on records—the *E flat major Quartet, No. 3* and the *D major, No. 6* (called *The Frog*). Both are played by the Pro Arte's. It is curious that the *F sharp minor, No. 4* was not chosen for recording; Tovey rightfully calls it a great work, but it is a difficult one to perform and requires considerable rehearsal to do it justice. The *F major, No. 5*, "in exquisite childlike happiness from beginning to end" (Tovey), is most gratifying to play, and the group that can tellingly realize all its subtleties will find its listeners greatly pleased. The first two quartets—in *B flat* and *C major*—need not concern us; they are well made but of less interest.

A GREAT WORK

The *E flat major, No. 3* is regarded by Tovey as one of Haydn's greatest works; one that should be better known. To the student this work will furnish striking testimony of Haydn's ingenious economy in the employment of his thematic material. The opening theme of the first movement, which he proceeds to develop before bringing in a counter subject, is the kernel of much that comes afterwards. Indeed, parts of the opening melodies of the second and fourth movements are drawn from it.

The frog-like effect of the theme of its finale gives the *D major, No. 6* its sobriquet. Here is undeniably a work of assured mastery and maturity. The opening movement "begins as in the middle of a sentence" (Tovey); it is distinguished for its breadth of design. The slow movement, with its variations on a single theme, follows the rules of propriety, but owns interest in its harmonic modulations. The Minuet is one of Haydn's best, and the finale has been aptly termed one of the composer's most brilliant and original. The repeated *bariolage* passages recall the frog, which Haydn may or may not have been imitating when he wrote this spirited piece.

Opus 54 has three quartets, all recorded by

the Pro Arte's and one by the Budapests. Examining the first violin parts of these works, one might think that Haydn had a noted virtuoso in mind. Actually the works were dedicated to a merchant, by name Tost, who although only a tolerable player thought very highly of himself.

The *G major, No. 1* has a splendid opening movement filled with delicious gusto. The themes, like so many of Haydn's, are not very important in themselves; it is the immaculate craftsmanship that makes them so attractive and worth repeated hearings. This movement definitely marks an advance in the composer's style. The slow movement is reflective; it is music that might be called heartfelt, and its modulations are a perpetual pleasure. The Minuet is less impressive, but nonetheless a little gem. The finale is one of those movements which sound easier to play than they really are. It is inimitably gracious and spirited, playful and humorous, and its construction is on a par with that of the first movement. It requires the utmost precision to do it justice. The Pro Arte's do not begin to achieve the technical ease, the wide range of tonal coloring and dynamic shading that the Budapest group realize.

A CELLIST'S FAVORITE

The *Quartet in C major, No. 2* was a great favorite of Joachim's cellist Hausmann. Tovey contends the first movement is the biggest and most symphonic in Haydn's output up to this point. Certainly it holds the major interest. The Adagio is a strange, capricious piece. The Minuet is only distinguished by the Trio. Not all cellists share Hausmann's admiration of the introductory Adagio to the finale, even though it gives a cellist an opportunity for fine tone-production in the upper register. There is much more in this music than the Pro Arte's realize in their performance.

The *E major Quartet, No. 3* is regarded by Tovey as one of Haydn's greatest works. It possesses a first movement that is particularly arresting for the contrasted part-writing, and a slow movement of tender songful character with an ingratiating rhythmic freedom. The Minuet employs the "Scottish snap", which gives it a healthy rhythmic accentuation, and the final Rondo is a buoyant, bouncing movement suggesting a rustic mood.

Opus 55 also contains only three quartets. Of these the first and third are available in recordings by the Pro Arte's. This opus is also dedicated to Merchant Tost.

The *A major, No. 1* opens in gay, carefree manner, with some clever dramatic touches. The Adagio, in rondo form, is "a very difficult thing to handle with Haydnesque breadth" (Tovey). The pleasant Minuet leads the first violinist into Alpine heights in the Trio, and the finale which starts out as the customary Rondo suddenly turns into a wonderful double fugue which in turn gives way to the opening rondo material. This is a stunning movement. But, for that matter, the whole work is a splendid one. Tovey contends it is as great as its more famous companion, the Razor Quartet (*Opus 55, No. 2*), which is not recorded.

THE RAZOR QUARTET

The Razor Quartet, in F minor and major, is regarded by Tovey as among Haydn's most intellectual works. Although he admonishes musicians against calling it ineffective, I agree with some musician friends of mine who think it lacks interest except in its finale.

After the superb first movement of the *B flat Quartet, No. 3*, the Adagio, in variation form, seems a decided let-down. It is, in my estimation, a dull movement. The Minuet does not help raise the standard of the work, yet Haydn's use of chromaticism here as in the first movement remains a novel feature. The finale is spirited and full of good humor. With such a good beginning and ending, one can only wonder what happened to Haydn's muse in between.

Opus 64, which comes next, contains six quartets. Here we encounter the composer's fully ripened genius, and his four most constantly played quartets—Nos. 3 to 6. All of these are recorded, but not the *B minor, No. 2*—a thoughtful work which is shamefully neglected. The *C major, No. 1*, on the other hand, never seems to have caught on. It lacks the personality of the other five. Yet Haydn's equal treatment of the four parts here shows a decided advancement. Amateurs like the Allegretto scherzoso, which provides solos for all four players. Tovey calls attention to the slow movements of these quartets, which are less ornate and more idyllic in structure.

The *B flat major, No. 3*, like its sister works, is distinguished for its unusually contrasted linear construction. All four movements are effective, but the chief interest will be found in the delightfully elative Minuet and the gay finale. The first subject of the opening movement shows a new use of chromaticism; this whole movement tends toward textural refinement which demands fleet fingers to do it justice. It is recorded by the Pro Arte's.

PASTORAL QUALITIES

The *G major Quartet, No. 4* is a joy from beginning to end. The opening Allegro con brio, which is in the composer's most genial comic vein, is adroitly fashioned. Cecil Gray may well mark the "remarkable homogeneity, continuity and outward flow of the music"; the four parts are indeed inspiringly treated. He is fully justified in saying that "few movements in the quartets are more 'of a piece' than this one". The Minuet and Adagio suggest the clearest kind of a day in the country. One German writer has said the finale bears an unmarked dedication to Mozart. Haydn is completely untroubled in this music. This work is also recorded by the Pro Arte Quartet.

The *D major Quartet, No. 5*, called *The Lark*, has long been a concert-hall favorite. The trills of the first violin in the opening movement have, of course, supplied the nickname for this work. It has been also called the Hornpipe Quartet, because of the famous *perpetuum mobile* finale, which is one of the finest of its type penned by Haydn. A songful Adagio follows the opening, with the first violinist still the singer. The pleasant Minuet gives all players fairly equal opportunities, and so does the vivacious finale. The Pro Arte's did not record this work in their Society issues. Some years back Victor announced a performance by the famous Flonzaley Quartet (discs 7650 - 51), but this was never issued. Perhaps it was just as well, for the recordings of the Flonzaleys conveyed only in part the group's polished unity and finely schooled technique; the reproduction, made in the early days of electrical recording, was poorly balanced and insensitively monitored. The best of the several recordings available from European catalogues is, in my estimation, the excellently reproduced one made by the Caplet

Quartet (Telefunken discs A2243/45).

The *E flat major Quartet, No. 6* has an excellently written opening movement, in which the strong first subject is the dominating force. The development section is particularly ingenious and imaginative; its extension is truly suggestive of the mature Beethoven. This movement is justly described as the most "closely reasoned of all Haydn's first movements in the medium of the string quartet" (Gray). The beautifully poetic Andante is distinguished by its declamatory middle section in the minor. The Andante is an outstanding movement, even though the writing is more typical of the keyboard than of string instruments. The forceful Minuet has been likened to an Austrian Laendler, and the final Presto is a complete joy. Sometimes one suspects that Haydn knew more about beginnings and endings than any composer, but this is probably a momentary illusion due to the complete enjoyment of the moment. This quartet is recorded by the Pro Arte's.

INSPIRATION IN ENGLAND

The three quartets of *Opus 71* were written during Haydn's first English visit (1793), and are among his ripest contributions to the form. Yet there is more interest in what Haydn does with his material than in the material itself. Part of the fun of knowing Haydn is to visualize his manipulation of his material. Too many listeners ask only for an emotional stimulus: the intellectual side of the art is lost to them. Haydn the great economist is evidenced in the *Quartet in B flat major, No. 1* (and, for that matter, in the others too). Cecil Gray has wisely stressed this point in his notes. Gray provided more musical illustrations than one will find in the dry Victor booklet, thus definitely enhancing the musical adventure here for all who read music. Haydn adroitly alters phrases rhythmically and also inverts them, but the ear does not always hear such relations; the eye, however, apprehends these things, and helps clarify them for the ear. Out of the opening phrase of the first movement much is drawn by the composer; in fact the thematic material for almost every movement can be traced to it. The opening movement is a notable one, the sort of thing that makes a string quartet enthusiast give thanks that Haydn existed. The Adagio is

notable for the beauty of its closely integrated part-writing. In contrast is the jovial Minuet and the final Rondo, which is irresistibly buoyant and carefree but musically of considerable significance. This work is recorded by the Pro Arte's. Neither the *D major* nor the *E flat major* (Nos. 2 and 3) is recorded; they look interesting from the score but musician friends of mind claim the *D major* is less persuasive than the *E flat* in performance. The latter they claim is worth cultivating. Perhaps this might suggest a potential recording to some ensemble.

The three quartets of *Opus 74*, also written during Haydn's first English visit, manifest, as one German writer has said, the most felicitous blend of style, craftsmanship, and imagination. All three have assured audience appeal, and all three are available on records by the Pro Arte's.

The *C major Quartet, No. 1* is a tremendously interesting work, particularly from the standpoint of form; it also illustrates Haydn's economy in the use of material. The first movement, with its two development sections, is a fascinating adventure in form. There is marked originality in the Andantino with its thematic discourses between first violin and viola. And the finale is one of those exhilarating experiences that only Haydn seems to afford. One could write a volume on Haydn's inimitable finales.

A NEGLECTED MASTERPIECE

Tovey calls the *F major Quartet, No. 2* a neglected masterpiece. The bustling spirit and deftly pointed phrases of the first movement are a sheer delight. Its virtuoso elements demand much of the players. One can hardly imagine anyone tiring of this music. The grace and manners of an old-world court (the Esterhazy establishment) are in the Andante grazioso, but the Minuet pays its homage to the people. The finale with its bristling spirit recalls the first movement; it too demands much of the players. The Pro Arte performance, while appreciable, does not begin to explore fully the contrasts in tonal coloring of this music. I would like to hear the Budapests play this work.

The *G minor Quartet, No. 3*, called the *Horseman* because of the prancing rhythm that dominates the opening movement, has long been a great favorite with players and public alike. The solemn Largo is one of

Haydn's best known movements. Tovey calls the opening a "blustering, tragic" movement and finds similar implications in the finale. Both these movements end happily.

THE OPUS 76 QUARTETS

The six quartets of *Opus 76* are among the composer's most treasurable contributions to the form. Cobbett says they are of outstanding beauty, "and if Haydn had never written another quartet they would have served to immortalize his name". The richness of the inner parts has unquestionably contributed to their great appeal, but the equal distribution of opportunities for all the players to shine provides just reason for this work being frequently performed. Haydn was a man in his middle sixties when he wrote this series. It is fortunate for enthusiasts of fine quartet writing that all six are available on records, although it is unfortunate that the six recordings are not so easy to acquire. In the Society sets, the Pro Arte's provide only two—the so-called *Emperor Quartet, No. 3* and the so-called *Sunrise, No. 4*.

The opening movement of the *Quartet in G major, No. 1* owns a joyous dancing spirit, which the Poltronieri Quartet, in its recorded performance (English Columbia discs 9777/78), convey. The slow movement has been termed of the *lebe wohl* order of sentiment, but some find a devotional quality in its placidity. The Minuet is casual but engaging, and the finale—the longest movement of the four—brings us fresh evidence of Haydn's imaginative treatment of his endings. Such inspiration as we find in this quartet may well have found its source in nature on a calm day when gentle breezes eased the heat of the sun, as one English writer (Sydney Grew) has suggested, and that remark is in no way intended to suggest a latter-day romanticism.

The *D minor Quartet, No. 2* opens with a two-bar motive in open fifths, which has given this work the nickname of the *Quinten Quartet*. Haydn develops this motive with great ingenuity—one is tempted to say to the utmost. Cobbett says of the canonical Minuet that it pictures "a set of brawling clowns stamping their feet tempestuously, one of them finishing after the rest"; it is

(Continued on page 167)



FROM DUET TO SEXTET

By Stephen Fassett

PART 6

Ponselle and Martinelli, and later Giannini and Pertile made excellent electrical recordings of the final duet from *Aida*, but the irresistible beauty of Caruso's singing always lures me back to the performance he and Gadski recorded in New York City more than 35 years ago. That version of *La fatal pietra* and *Morir sì pura e bella* (89028/29 or 8015), issued in January 1910, became an immediate best-seller and still is easy to find. Gadski, a remarkably versatile and accomplished soprano, sings her share of the duet in a thoroughly satisfying manner. Hers was not a voice of well-nigh limitless scope, like Ponselle's, for example, but it was a fine and powerful organ used with skill and taste. As for Caruso, by 1910 his voice had gained a full measure of the distinctive baritone coloring that set it apart from the ordinary tenor, still retaining, however, much of the suavity of its early lyric period. Nor had the brilliance of the high notes begun to diminish. It was at this time, surely, that he was at the height of his vocal powers. Stylistically, his singing has seldom appealed to me more than in this *Aida* duet, where the expressiveness of his interpretation is heightened, rather than lessened, by his artistic restraint.

In March 1910, appeared the first of the

impressive series of *Faust* excerpts, starring Farrar, Caruso and Journet. These records achieved such popularity that the record buying public, for many years thereafter, probably could not think of Gounod's opera without associating Faust, Marguerite and Mephisto with the sound of these three famous voices. While Caruso's portrayal of Faust never gave visual satisfaction to those who remembered Jean de Reszke in the role, his unfailing vocal magnificence left no room for disappointment. In both looks and voice, Farrar was a lovely Marguerite. Her *Jewel Song*, to be sure, was never tossed off with the deft lightness of a Melba, though it was often well sung, but the rich warmth of her middle voice was ideally suited to the passion and poignance which the greater part of Marguerite's music demands.

Marcel Journet, the Mephisto of the series, had left the Metropolitan in 1908 to become a member of the Paris Opéra, and, to quote from an old catalog, "The Victor felt the loss of Journet so severely in 1909 that permission was asked for his temporary release, to assist in the making of the Victor concerted records of 1910. The Directors of the Opéra, with permission of the French Government, most generously allowed the Victor Company to borrow Journet for a brief period, and he sailed for America on January 1st. After assisting in the making

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MARIA KURENKO, Soprano: *Grechanihoff Songs*, including *Credo*, *The Wounded Birch*, *Over the Steppe*, others. With the Composer at the Piano. Album M-862, \$3.50.

JAN PEERCE, Tenor: *Bluebird of Happiness; Because*. With Victor Orchestra, Sylvan Levin, Conductor. Record 11-9007, \$1.00.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Vladimir Golschmann, Conductor: *The Swan Lake*—Tchaikovsky. M/DM-1028, \$5.75.

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GREATEST ARTISTS ARE ON RCA VICTOR RECORDS

of a most wonderful set of Victor records, including the famous *Faust* series with Caruso and Farrar, he returned on the Lusitania, January 19th, to reappear at the Opéra in the production of Boito's *Mefistofele*." This was perhaps the first time a celebrated singer had crossed an ocean for the specific purpose of making records. Truly the "talking machine" had come a long way in a short time. Only seven years earlier, it had required hours of talking and much wining and dining before Emilio de Gogorza was able to persuade Pol Plancon, Journet's great predecessor, to sing for "The Victor" in a studio only a few blocks from the basso's hotel. Then, singers were to have their names associated with what they regarded as an upstart toy but, by 1910, they were already eager to be known as a Victor Red Seal Artist. How quickly the situation had reversed itself!

To facilitate the discussion of the 1910 ensemble recordings from *Faust* the entire group is listed here:

March 1910

Farrar and Caruso—*Mon coeur est pénétré* (89033 or 8010)

Farrar and Caruso—*Attends, voici la rue* (89034 or 8010)

Farrar, Caruso and Journet—*Final Trio* (95203 or 10008)

April 1910

Caruso and Journet—*O merveille* (89039 or 8016)

Farrar and Journet—*Church Scene, Part I* (89035 or 8021)

Farrar and Journet—*Church Scene, Part II* (89037 or 8021)

May 1910

Farrar, Gilibert, Caruso and Journet—*Siegneur Dieu* (95204 or 10004)

Farrar, Gilibert, Caruso and Journet—*Eh quoi toujours seule* (95205 or 10004)

Farrar and Caruso—*Il se fait tard* (89032 or 8009)

Farrar and Caruso—*Eternelle* (89031 or 8009)

Farrar and Journet—*Elle ouvre sa fenêtre* (89040 or 8022)

With the exception of Mme. Gilibert, the singers have figured too often in my articles to require extended comment. However, since little is known about Mme. Gilibert,

she deserves a brief paragraph. Gabrielle Gilibert-Lejeune, to give her full professional name, was a Belgian by birth. She was trained at the Liege Conservatory and in 1892 made her debut at La Monnaie, the opera house at Brussels, where so many famous singers received their initial stage experience. Later, she sang at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, and from 1895 to 1909 she sang regularly at Covent Garden. During 1906-07, she was a member of the Manhattan Opera company in New York. As might be guessed, she was the wife of the beloved French baritone, Charles Gilibert.

FINE SINGING

Mechanically, these *Faust* records are no better and no worse than the standard Victor had already established for itself. The voices of Farrar and Caruso are heard at their best, and their duets are movingly sung. Farrar, of all the sopranos who made duet recordings with Caruso, was the most successful in matching the incomparable Neapolitan. The tonal and emotional qualities of the two singers, who sang together so frequently for so many years, always seemed to blend exceptionally well. She, herself, is in agreement with this assertion. Perhaps the most popular record of the lot was the *Trio*, which still turns up in almost every batch of old discs the collector is likely to find. It is surprisingly effective, all things considered, and far superior to the 1907 version by Eames, Dalmoes and Plancon. Also easy to find is Part I of the love duet, *Il se fait tard*, which is outstanding. Worthy of special mention too is Farrar's thrilling singing in *Elle ouvre sa fenêtre*. Some collectors think this record should have been listed as a trio, for towards the end a tenor (presumably Caruso, but according to some an artist of far less greatness) sings one word, "Marguerite!", but the Victor concern never saw fit to give label credit to the singer responsible for that brief utterance.

Two other products of Journet's much publicised visit to the United States were a duet with Caruso—*Solo profugo* from *Martha* (89036 or 8016), and one with Farrar—*Les hirondelles* from *Mignon* (89038 or 8022), which were issued in March and April. Of the two, *Solo profugo* is musically the more ingratiating, and, thanks particularly to Caruso's glorious singing, the better per-

formance. The *Mignon* duet, on the other hand, is a dull affair and the capable performers should be forgiven for not making it more interesting.

In June 1910, aside from the *Trio from the Duel from Faust*, Victor issued three other red seal recordings of concerted music. Rita Fonia, Riccardo Martin and Antonio Scotti were offered in the trio *Lo so che alle sue pene from Madam Butterfly* on a ten-inch disc (87503). By 1925, the end of the acoustic era, this was the only example of the voices of Fonia and Martin left in the catalog, which is a pity because both singers may be heard to better advantage in their solo discs. Rita Fonia, née Newman, was born in San Francisco on July 17, 1878 and died in Paris on October 27, 1922. She studied in Europe, first as a coloratura soprano and then, under the guidance of Jean de Reszke, as a mezzo, and returned to this country in 1906. After singing a short time with the Savage Opera Company, she joined the Metropolitan and remained a member until shortly before her death. Judging from her best records, which are rarities, her voice, technique and musicianship were of very high quality.

Riccardo Martin was born in Kentucky on November 18, 1879 and was said to have been the first American tenor engaged to sing leading roles at the Metropolitan Opera. He studied in Europe with Sbriglia and Lombardi and sang at the Metropolitan from 1907 to 1916, retiring from opera in the early 1920s. Martin's voice was powerful and brilliant and, in this recording, both he and Scotti tend to overpower poor Fonia whose true qualities are not revealed.

The other June records were duets. *Tutte le feste from Rigoletto* (89042), the only duet that Sembrich and Sammarco ever recorded, proved to be a disappointing performance. The Gadski-Homer recording of *Su e con me vieni cara from Orfeo ed Euridice* (89041) was more important since these singers were featured in the famous Toscanini revival of the Gluck opera on December 24, 1909. Homer's Orfeo was praised for its nobility and dignity, and Gadski's Euridice was admired for style and tonal expressiveness. The record in question, however, does not do them justice and the recording is not too good.

(To be continued)

Chamber Music Survey

(Continued from page 162)

"at once a fine example of canonical writing and a priceless bit of fooling". The Trio has gained the name of the *Witches Trio* in Germany; a wholly unacceptable simile to me as is also the "brawling clowns" of Cobbett. It appears that while Haydn was writing the finale he was disturbed by the braying of a donkey, whereupon he incorporated the bray into the music. There is a gypsy character to the final Vivace, in which the donkey is not by any means out of place. The Poltronieri Quartet has recorded this work (Italian Columbia discs GQX10135/36—old domestic Columbia 68215/16). Mischa Elman and his quartet also recorded it (Victor discs 6701/02). I prefer the performance of the Poltronieri to that of the Elman group; furthermore the recording of the latter, made in 1927, is not desirable.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 150)

viewer, Mr. Henry S. Gerstlé, overstepped himself in regard to reproduction in his review of the Beethoven *Third Concerto*, as performed by Artur Rubinstein and the NBC Symphony under the direction of Maestro Toscanini (Victor set 1016). This recording was made from a broadcast performance and definitely possesses some of the undesirable aspects of radio; there is a lack of overlapping tonal resonance which can result in unpleasant reproduction on some equipment. But on both Mr. Gerstlé's set and our own this recording reproduces well and sounds good. We traced one correspondent's trouble to a faulty crystal cartridge and motor. Upon taking care of these conditions he found the set sounded good and he was glad he had kept it. A faulty motor can create a decided waviness of tone, particularly where there is a lack of "over-lapping" resonance. Perhaps not all of us would be willing to agree with Mr. Gerstlé that this recording is "just about as near perfect as is possible to make it", for most of us like more hall resonance than he does, but we would hardly claim that it was unwise of Victor to re-press this recording of a great broadcast performance, even though it contains some constriction of tone and lack of clarity.

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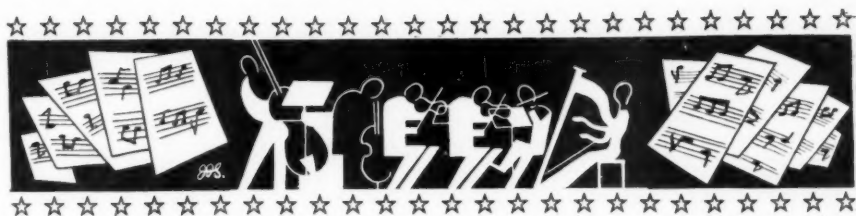
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RECORD NOTES AND R E V I E W S

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

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Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Leonore Overture, No. 3, Opus 72a* (3 sides), and *Prometheus Overture, Opus 43*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor set SP 2, two discs, price \$2.25.

▲ This is a welcome release, for no one performs the *Leonore No. 3* quite like Toscanini. There is firmness and strength in the playing and an almost uncanny sense of rightness in the building-up of drama. What matter that some fourteen other versions of this overture exist—there may be more, I've lost count—for Toscanini does a job that remains unmatched in my estimation. One could

have wished that the recording had been made in a larger hall, but N.B.C.'s Studio 8H when empty provides far better results than it does during a broadcast, as comparison with this recording and the recent *Third Piano Concerto* will prove. In 1940, when Studio 8H yielded a more rigid tonal quality to recording (such as we find in Toscanini's performance of the *Eroica*, surely a set he should be permitted to do over), a recording of the *Leonore No. 3* was made by this same orchestra under the direction of the Maestro. Somebody wisely held up or prevented that release in this country, but it was issued in England, where the performance was lauded as the best but the recording was rightfully regarded as hard-featured in quality.

My good friend, W. R. Anderson, writing in *The Gramophone* of December 1940, had some things to say about this overture and Toscanini's performance that I think should be repeated here. Remarking that the work was in reality a tone poem, a point of view with which I agree, he went on to say that with the briefest knowledge of the opera plot anyone coming newly to this work would be thrilled and delighted. The overture is, of course, in itself a condensation of what is dramatic in the opera, and is far greater within itself than the opera is within itself. Anderson says that Beethoven evokes more drama and conflict in this music than do the pages of the libretto: "what a great artist

we realize Beethoven to be, every time we harken with the spirit to those hints and foreshadowings whether it be melodically (as the opening descent suggests the beginning of Florestan's air), or spiritually, as he forecasts the triumph of right, in such firm strong uplifting music. . . . Toscanini's precision and loftiness of spirit alike conspire to make the record impressive both in the drama" of the first half, "having a climax in the trumpet without, a stroke which I have compared to the knocking at the door, in *Macbeth*". He goes on to remark on the extraordinary dramatic build of the rest of the performance terminating in "a wild burst of joy" which surely fulfils all one's expectations.

The *Prometheus Overture* is by no means the great work that the *Leonore No. 3* is; it belongs to the period of the *First Symphony* and although it owns a boldness we do not find in the symphony it lacks the dramatic mastery that was to come later, and its scoring is still in the Haydn-Mozart vein. The overture comes from music that Beethoven wrote for the ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (*The Creatures of Prometheus*), which was produced in Vienna in 1801. One appreciates this music in the firm utterance of Toscanini more than one did in the performance of Weingartner, which was decidedly lacking in the same strength of purpose.

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 6 in F major, Opus 68 (Pastoral)*; played by the New York City Symphony Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M or DM-1032, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Not received in time for review this month.

BERLIOZ: *The Roman Carnival—Overture, Opus 9*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction of Serge Koussevitzky. Victor disc 11-9008, price \$1.00.

▲ This overture was originally part of the composer's opera *Benvenuto Cellini*. Berlioz, who liked to write voluminously about his music, had this to say after he conducted the Vienna premiere of this overture: "It exploded like a mass of fireworks, and was encoored with a noise of feet and hands never

heard except in Vienna." The overture begins with the sprightly Saltarello (an Italian dance) theme brilliantly stated; then, over a pizzicato accompaniment, the solo English horn sings the Love Song of Benvenuto from the first act of the opera. The main body of the overture begins with a theme for strings that comes from a chorus in the second act. The Saltarello returns at the end and brings the work to a dazzling conclusion.

While this is the fifth Koussevitzky-Boston Symphony recording released since the record ban, it actually was the very first work recorded by the conductor and his orchestra when the ban was lifted. As a performance, this, in my estimation, takes precedence over all other existing versions, since Koussevitzky excels in this sort of music where dramatic excitement can be exploited to advantage along with virtuosity of performance. True, he does not achieve the rhythmic subtlety conveyed by Beecham in an earlier recording, but there is here a spontaneous vitality and abandon which ones suspect Berlioz would have heartily approved of. The individual players of the orchestra contribute to the virtuoso performance with their customary brilliance; worthy of especial mention if Louis Speyer's playing of the lovely English horn solo.

Although musically the present performance is highly admirable, the same cannot be said of the mechanical aspects of the recording. Most of the post-ban recordings of the Boston Symphony, with the exception of the plastic-disc set of *Till Eulenspiegel*, suffer, in my estimation, from an excessive hall reverberation. While a certain amount of hall resonance is desirable and even necessary for a life-like reproduction, excessive hall resonance, particularly in a score of this kind, causes fine points of inner lines to be swallowed up in the overwhelming clash of sound upon sound. The present recording, especially on the B side, is in this respect a great offender. Since the pre-ban recordings of this orchestra were usually models of clarity, it is to be hoped Victor will get rid of this excessive reverberation in future issues by this valued organization.

—Martin Bookspan

CHOPINIANA, Chopin compositions arranged by Dimitri Rogal-Lewitzky;

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played by the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set M or MM-598, three discs, price \$3.50.

▼The pieces used in this orchestral suite are *Etude in C minor, Op. 10, No. 12* ("Revolutionary"); *Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1*; *Macurka in B minor, Opus 33, No. 4*; *Valse brillante in E minor, Op. Posth.*; and *Polonaise in A flat major, Opus 53*. There is wide difference of opinion on whether Chopin's music lends itself satisfactorily to orchestration. No matter how clever the arranger may be one cannot but feel that the music is self-sufficient as Chopin penned it.

Lewitzsky is a Russian composer of whom we can find no reference in any book at hand. The useful *Handbook of Soviet Musicians*, by Prof. Egor Boelza (Pilot Press, Ltd., London, 1943) omits his name. According to the notes with this set, Mitropoulos on his first trip to Russia some years ago met Lewitzsky who was then a student composer. At that time the young composer was writing his music on brown wrapping paper, owing to the shortage of paper. Greatly impressed, Mitropoulos on his return to Central Europe sent a large supply of manuscript paper to Lewitzsky, and the latter in gratitude forwarded the conductor this score which the composer had dedicated to him.

Lewitzsky seems to have been anxious to give everyone in the orchestra something to do, for his transcriptions are by no means meager ones. To our way of thinking they are over-elaborated. Lewitzsky pays more than one nod to Tchaikovsky, Shostokovich, and even Wagner. Much of the poetic capriciousness of Chopin is lost by inflated effects; and a great deal of drama is brought to play to supplement it. Several music lovers have expressed to us their admiration of the treatment accorded the *Revolutionary Etude*. This would indicate that others will probably like it too. It seems to us that if one likes the etude there is no reason why one will not like the rest of the pieces.

There can be no question of a doubt that Mitropoulos likes this work, for he plays it with undeniable fervor and enthusiasm. Once again, the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra shows up well on records, and the recording is in every way a good one. —P.G.

COUPERIN (arr. Milhaud): *Overture and Allegro* from *La Sultane Suite*; played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia disc 12161-D, price \$1.00.

▲In 1942 Victor gave us a recording of this music by Golschmann and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (disc 11-8238). At Golschmann's request, the contemporary French composer, Darius Milhaud, had arranged the first two movements of Couperin's suite, *La Sultane*, for modern orchestra, and Golschmann has since frequently performed this music in his concerts. It is good to find that other conductors have taken to playing this music, for it is typical of the spirited elegance of its composer, and melodically gracious and instantly appealing. In France during the latter part of the Occupation a concern was formed, called Les Discophiles Francais (see issue of *AML* for January 1945), which has issued two complete suites of Couperin, among other recordings of 18th-century music; the suites are *L'Impériale* and *Apothèse de Lulli*. These last are the only recordings to date, of which I know, of the string orchestra suites which Couperin wrote and which in his time were highly thought of. Milhaud has added other instruments to Couperin's original scoring and in so doing has pointed up many of the melodies in both an effective and agreeable

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manner. There is a quiet but unostentatious sentiment in the overture, which occupies three-quarters of the recording, and a buoyancy and gaiety to the little allegro which looms up here as a sort of spirited coda to the overture.

Mitropoulos' performance of this music adheres to its historical style and perspective; there is admirable sensitivity in coloring and a considerate regard for musicianly phrasing. Golschmann stressed its modern dress a little more, thus emphasizing Milhaud's part in the proceedings. Both men reveal a sympathy for and admiration of the music that is immediately imparted to the listener. The choice of recordings will be largely a personal matter. The St. Louis Symphony seems to me to be a better organization than the Minneapolis Orchestra, yet no one would deny that the latter organization turns in a good performance, and one has no wish to deter the listener from appreciation of Mitropoulos' sensitive reading of the music. Moreover, Columbia has provided good recording, especially appealing in its beauty of tone in the passage for high strings near the end of side one. —P.H.R.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 4, in G Major*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, Bruno Walter conducting; Desi Halban, soprano soloist. Columbia set M or MM-589, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ One evening last summer I happened into the office where I worked just as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, via Radio Okinawa, was getting into the slow movement of a symphony unfamiliar to me. I had been through so long a musicless period before the establishment of our GI broadcasting station that most anything sounded good in those days; and happily a fair proportion of the music they now gave us actually *was* good. This haunting movement struck me as few things have in times when music was more plentiful. Before long I had placed it as being Mahler, but I realized that of all the performances I had ever heard of this composer's symphonies, I retained but a very vague impression. I could hardly believe that I had experienced and forgotten this one. Presently the last movement began and a very pleasing soprano voice entered:

I was completely won over. I wanted more of Mahler, and above all I wanted to hear this particular work again.

Well here it is in a performance directed by the high priest of the Mahler cult, the man of all conductors in the world today who understands the Master best. And the recording is issued with a special note of appreciation from Bruno Walter himself, who feels that justice has been done.

The first four symphonies of Mahler are said to reflect nature. We must not, however, approach them expecting to hear four more *Pastoral Symphonies*. Mahler's view of nature is obviously not Beethoven's, though he may share with his great predecessor a certain lustiness and a sort of peasant light-heartedness. There is a strong folk quality in the abundant melodies of the first movement. We are told that the composer returned to something of the spirit of the Haydn symphonies, but if we accept this we must also acknowledge the fact that he returned with orchestral resources which would have overwhelmed Haydn. Considerable virtuosity is demanded of the solo instruments, particularly the horns, of which the composer appears to have been particularly fond. Aaron Copland has written of "the contrapuntal fabric of the musical texture" and Mahler's "strikingly original instrumentation." This first movement is a good illustration of this point.

"In the second movement," we are told, "the composer was under the spell of the self-portrait by Arnold Böcklin in which Death fiddles into the painter's ear while the latter listens enthralled." I find it a little hard to fit this idea with the music, reminiscent as it is of Mahler's more folksy songs — *Rheinlegendchen* for example. And there is hardly enough contrast with the first movement.

The *Andante*, Mahler's only symphonic movement built on a set of variations, remains a work of great loveliness, far finer, to my mind, than what has preceded it. And the fourth movement, with its soprano solo, stands up well with repetition. The device of using the voice in his symphonies was a favorite one with Mahler. Five of his nine and a half symphonies (not including *Das Lied von der Erde*, which is really a song-cycle with orchestra) employ singers. Here is backing for the theory that Mahler was

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essentially a vocal composer, that his ideas were actually vocal, though so grandly conceived for orchestra. His long association with the opera house and his abiding love for Mozart are part and parcel of this. Also we may take it that in the carrying out of his conceptions he liked to make use of the advantage which the vocal composer has over the instrumental—the addition of the word. Indeed we may look for the key to the meaning of this whole symphony in the simple and naive text which he chose from one of his favorite sources, Arnim and Brentano's collection of folk poetry, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. In its imaginative lines we have a child's conception of Heaven.

From this discussion it will probably appear that Mahler has achieved an unusual unity in this symphony, but we must admit that this is not the case. For the composer has two great weaknesses—overgenerosity and a certain formal looseness. True he does make musical reference to what has gone before, but the lack of contrast in the first two movements, not to mention their length, does not make for unity. And the transition into the heavenly *Andante*, on the other hand, is if anything too much of a contrast. He was a composer who thought grandly and who mastered the means of saying things in a big way, yet the very bigness of his intentions was his undoing. I imagine many owners of this set will often find themselves skipping the first two movements and returning to the *Andante*.

As I have already said, we have every reason to take this performance as the definitive one. But for all Walter's commendation, I would raise some question as to the quality of the recording. This is, as already noted, music of great detail, and it may be appropriate to emphasize its details; yet I find myself left with the impression rather of examining it through a microscope than of experiencing its moods. A few words should be said of the signing of Desi Halban, who, it seems, is the daughter of Selma Kurz, which great and famous lady was a protégée of Mahler. Miss Halban's voice is a sweet and clear one, and whether by inheritance or study, she has the proper sense of style. —P.L.M.

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McDONALD: *My Country at War*, Symphonic Suite; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set M or MM-592, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Mr. McDonald quite disarms us with the ingenuousness of his musical ideas. There is no pretentiousness in this work, it is as simple as A,B,C and as straightforward as an American highway. It reflects a sort of homespun philosophy, an American directness and an imagination that does not shrink from the commonplace. The war seems to have given the composer an urge to be heard from, and the suite grew just prior to and during the first two years of the conflict. The *Overture 1941* was given its first performance two days before Pearl Harbor. With war impending, McDonald was impelled to express "the martial spirit which was then engulfing the world", also some of the "pathos and tragedy which are the by-products of it" (this latter is conveyed in the second theme). Of the tone poem *Bataan* (the second movement), which has become the best known and admired part of the suite, the composer tells us it was written in the spring of 1942 when "the attention of all America was focused on Bataan Peninsula". During the late summer and fall the short third movement, *Elegy*, and the final movement, *Hymn of the People*, were penned. Although at first McDonald em-

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played a baritone voice in these movements, he later discarded it.

The best part of this work is unquestionably the Bataan section, a tone poem which can and has stood on its own legs in the concert hall. It is effective, if not greatly inspired, music. "It is natural for a composer," says Mr. McDonald, "to translate his most compelling emotional experiences into music." The thought of Bataan seems to have stirred him, but not profoundly. The accent of sentiment is strong and the music is designed with its rhythm of marching men and a certain ominousness to turn the listener's thoughts to that famous battle scene. The *Elegy* is music of simple sentiment. The finale does not rise to its subject, and the use of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* at the end is anti-climactic, in my estimation. It takes a more inspired composer than Mr. McDonald to make this sort of thing come to life. This whole suite has the characteristics of movie music, and as such will be accepted or discarded by the listener. Mr. Ormandy gives it a solicitous and forceful reading and the recording is excellently contrived. —P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Bolero* (3 sides); and MASSENET: *Thais—Meditation* (1 side); played by the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, direction of André Kostelanetz. Columbia set X or MX-257, price \$2.50.

▲ The last recording of this work was made by Stokowski and the All-American Youth Orchestra (Columbia set X-174) in 1940, the set issued by Victor (No. 793) in August 1941 performed by Piero Coppola and Grande Orchestre Symphonique having been made in 1933. Previously, in 1939, came the Fiedler-Boston "Pops" performance (Victor set 552), in many ways the best version of the work on records, although the brilliance of the recording makes for some problems in reproduction. The Robin Hood Dell Orchestra is the equivalent of the Boston "Pops"; just as the latter organization is composed of members of the Boston Symphony, the former is made up of members of the Philadelphia Orchestra who are heard every summer in a series of concerts, under various conductors, in the open air in Robin Hood Dell.

The reproduction here is unusually good, the Columbia engineers achieve a true pianissimo in the beginning and build to an ef-

fective climax, but here, as in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* one is conscious of the limitations of the phonograph. There is only a semblance of the dynamics of this music that we hear in the concert hall. Kostelanetz effects a compromise between the way Ravel is said to have wished the music performed and the manner in which most conductors project it. Ravel, while playing the work slightly slower, laid the rhythmic stress in the tympani rather than in the solo instruments; Kostelanetz gives the palm to the soloists but keeps his tympani well in evidence though in the background. The performance is admirable for its clarity of line, and the playing is on the whole well controlled. I liked the effect of the solo instruments cutting through the strings in the Mengelberg and Fiedler performances; here the strings are treated as a background in accordance with Ravel's indications and his own playing of this work.

Bolero is a composition which exploits a single dance rhythm too long for its own good; the whole thing is "the clever trick of a super-refined composer", as the late Philip Hale once said. If the story is true that Ravel was haunted in his last illness by the rhythms of this music, one can believe he probably wished he had never set down on paper his ingenious musical trick. I'd hate to be haunted by this music, which has become less and less appealing to me as time goes on. But perhaps I take the whole thing too seriously; its element of surprise in the beginning made many of us regard the work more seriously than we should have.

Mr. Kostelanetz's encore is in the tradition of his radio work; the suavity of his string tone is well exploited in this saccharine music, and he brings just enough swellings and heavings to please all those who admire the Massenet piece. Returning to *Bolero*, I think Kostelanetz has done a better job than Stokowski did and the recording assuredly reproduces far more satisfactorily. Moreover, the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra is a better organization than the ill-fated All-American Youth Group. —P.H.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *The Swan Lake—Ballet*; played by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. Victor set M or DM-1028, five discs, price \$5.75.

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▲After giving us one of the best, if not the best, performance on records of *The Nutcracker Suite* a couple of months ago, we hardly expected Victor to hit the jackpot again, but it has. This is the best playing of any of the Tchaikovsky ballets on records. *The Swan Lake* has always seemed rather pallid Tchaikovsky for me; true, the music has grace and charm but it lacks the fantasy and coloring of the composer's later ballets. Golschmann almost alters my previous opinion of this music by giving it more musicianly exposition than ballet conductors usually do. Had the conductor been a man like Golschmann at the premiere performance of the ballet in the Imperial Theatre at Moscow in August 1875, its reception might have been different and its popularity instantly established even though Tchaikovsky improved the score in later years by cutting and adding to it. I am given to understand that Golschmann has had experience as a ballet conductor, which gives us a possible clue to his enthusiasm and sympathetic feeling for this music.

Those who enjoy well played ballet music, and more particularly this score (of which there is more here than in previous recordings), have a decided treat for them in this set. Not only does the St. Louis Symphony show up on records to best advantage, and the conductor provide an estimable performance, but the reproduction is excellently contrived, with clarity of line and naturalness of tone. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *La Forza del Destino*—Overture; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 11-9010, price \$1.00.

▲Three overtures by Maestro Toscanini this month after his Haydn symphony and his brilliant renditions of a group of Rossini overtures last month. This is, indeed, something over which to rejoice. Verdi's brilliant and dramatic overture is not one of his best orchestral operatic openings; the work, built on themes from the opera, is not put together in the best way for true dramatic continuity. However, when it is well played, as it is here, one enjoys it for the quality of its melodies, as one enjoys the opera itself in the theatre when it is well sung. Memories of atrocious performances of this music

by bands and inadequate operatic orchestras in Italy fade out when we hear Toscanini's performance. It is, more than anything else, the orderliness of the playing, the fine precision and musicianly shaping of the melodies, the delightful emergence of detail. The beauty of the strings after the pause in the opening is most appealing, and the fullness of the ominous basses later is another feature—seldom does one hear them so convincingly brought forth. But all this is the magic of the Toscanini touch; and though even he cannot make this overture more than a hotch-potch, yet what a glorious hotch-potch it proves to be when he plays it. The recording is quite to my liking, and I think it will be for most people. —P.H.R.

Novelty

KLEINSINGER-TRIPP: *Tubby the Tuba*; Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leon Barzin, with Victor Jory, narrator. Cosmopolitan Record Set DMR-101, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

▲*Tubby the Tuba* is one of those delightful whimsies that appeal to people of all ages, although actually it was written with children in mind. It is a close cousin to Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and equally as fascinating and entertaining. Tubby wants to play a tune but the tuba is not expected to play a tune; the other instruments revile him but in the end—but that is something one should not reveal. The libretto of this work is by Paul Tripp, the music by George Kleinsinger,

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the young American composer who wrote *I Hear America Singing* (Victor set 777). Both Tripp and Kleinsinger have provided a delightful bit of musical fun which is, of course, also intended to provide an orchestral lesson. Mr. Jory proves an excellent and understanding narrator and Mr. Barzin and his orchestra do full justice to their parts. The tuba is played by Herbert Jenkel of the NBC Symphony.

Cosmopolitan has provided good recording. The discs are vinylite pressings which, despite their automatic sequence, may not operate efficiently on all changers. Even though one finds that vinylite discs do not wear well on one's own equipment, I'd recommend the purchase of these records; for they certainly provide an unusually entertaining quarter of an hour. —P.H.R.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in D major, Opus 102, No. 2*; played by Gregor Piatigorsky (cello) and Ralph Berkowitz (piano). Columbia set X or MX-258, two discs, price \$2.50.

▼ This is the last of Beethoven's cello sonatas; although not a first recording it is the first time the work has appeared on domestic record lists. Casals and Horszowski, who gave us such a superb performance of the *C major Sonata, Opus 102, No. 1*, also played this work for an English recording just prior to the war (H.M.V. discs DB-3914/16), but this has never been issued here. In this opus Beethoven supplies the deepest and only lengthy slow movement in his cello sonatas. More than the heart of the sonata, it is one of Beethoven's most searching Adagios—meditative and religious in character, and expressive of that inwardness and spiritual elevation that is found in the music of his later years. The work came after the *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies* and that last and loveliest of violin and piano sonata, *Opus 96*, a pastoral tone poem which deserves a domestic recording. The opening movement of this work, unlike its companion in the *C major Sonata*, is from the start energetic and self-possessed, since there is no

slow introduction. The marking *Allegro con brio* points up the virtuoso aspects of the music. In the finale, Beethoven turns to the first strict fugue to be found in his instrumental sonatas and pens a movement, which, though revealing confidence, is nonetheless lacking in the flexibility that his fore-runner Bach achieved in such matters. I would not go so far as to say with Schauffler that this fugue was brutal, although I know that it is difficult to play. Bekker regarded it as one of "exalted confidence", but it must be admitted that it lacks poetic relief and becomes a sort of virtuoso stunt for both players who are constantly on their toes with no relief until the final bar. Piatigorsky and Berkowitz do a remarkable job on this movement, and their timing is better than in either of the other movements where, upon occasion, the pianist is just a fraction of a second ahead of the cellist. But the performance is on the whole is praiseworthy; particularly from the standpoint of the recording which provides a really fine balance between the two instruments. I think Casals would bring firmer phrasing to the opening allegro, but Piatigorsky is always admirable for his expressive tone, and, as in all the cello sonatas, Beethoven has written for the instrument in a manner to exploit its singing qualities. In the slow movement, Piatigorsky relies on his expressive tone to yield the emotion, hence his playing, while musicianly, does not seem here as searching as it might have been. However, the listener who knows and admires the other cello sonatas of Beethoven will not want to miss this set; it is a worthy addition to the master's chamber music literature in domestic record catalogues, and I cannot compliment too highly Columbia on the well balanced and tonally realistic reproduction. —P.H.R.

Keyboard

CHOPIN: *Nocturne in F sharp, Opus 15, No. 2*; and RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF (arr. Rachmaninoff): *Flight of the Bumble Bee*; LIADOFF: *The Music Box, Opus 32*; played by Alexander Brailowsky (piano). Victor disc 11-9009, price \$1.00.

▲ Not received in time for review this month.

DEBUSSY: *Preludes, Book I*; played by E. Robert Schmitz (piano). Victor set M or DM-1631, seven 10-inch discs, price \$5.75.

▲ This set was not received by the time we went to press. To be reviewed next month.

DEBUSSY: *First Arabesque in E major; Serenade à la Poupée; Second Arabesque in G major; Voiles; La Serenade interrompue; Minstrels; Golliwog's Cake-Walk; La Fille aux cheveux de lin*; played by Gaby Casadesus (piano). Asch set DM-103, four 10-inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Mme. Casadesus is the wife of Robert Casadesus, the distinguished French pianist, and has been heard in public in two-piano performances with her husband. On her own, this lady is a gifted executant, as these performances assuredly prove. Moreover, she shows herself a singularly knowing exponent of Debussy's piano music with an unusual gift for nuance and tonal coloring. She makes much freer use of the pedal than some others do in music of this sort—Gieseking, for example. There is both delicacy and warmth in her playing, and a nice feeling for humor where that elusive quality is essential to the good of the music, as in *Golliwog's Cake-Walk* and the *Serenade interrompue*. Regarding the latter, a silly mistake in labeling finds this piece under the label of the *Serenade à la Poupée* and vice versa. The Debussyite would probably have preferred it if this lady had played a less varied program, for some of these pieces are far less substantial than others. As charmingly as she traverses the two *Arabesques*, one cannot recommend these pieces for continued listening. However, as a Debussy program on records, this set deserves a place as one of the best, and one may hope that Mme. Casadesus will do some more French music on records in the near future. Since she studied the music of Ravel, Pierné, Fauré and Roussel with the composers, one would like to have her record some of her favorites among their works.

Piano tone and recording are good, but the surfaces here are a bit obtrusive. —P.H.R.

SCRIABIN: *Piano Sonata No. 3, in F Sharp Minor, Op. 23*; played by Yolanda Bolotina. Paraclete 10-inch discs Nos. 25, 26 and 27, price \$3.00.

▲ After an interval of many months Paraclete has resumed its series of recordings of the piano music of Alexander Scriabin with the publication of his *Third Sonata*. The present reviewer has on a previous occasion called attention to the excellent musicianship of Miss Bolotina, and these records confirm the good impression that she made at that time.

The desire to have all of the ten Scriabin sonatas available on records no doubt prompted the recording of the present one, which is hardly a work that cries out for perpetuation in this form. Nevertheless, there are many points of interest in the sonata. A dramatic first movement is followed by a curious slow scherzo, intimate, and by turns half-shy and half-bold. The ensuing adagio is in the nature of an extended prelude of the type that is found frequently throughout the early Scriabin. The sonata is brought to a close with a passionate finale, the introduction to which is based on the opening theme of the first movement.

This is rather unadventurous music, but interesting to those who would trace Scriabin's curious creative development from the early imitative days to his last phase in which his style was absolutely his own. For instance, between this and the *Fourth Sonata*, written six years later, there is a world of difference. His musical personality had developed in the intervening years to such an extent that the superficial listener can hardly detect any resemblance between the two styles.

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I have only one fault to find with the recording: there does not seem to be sufficient dynamic contrast between the loud and soft passages. —H S.G.

ELIZABETHAN SUITE (arr. by Ethel Bartlett); played by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, duo-pianists. Columbia set X-256, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ We are told that Miss Bartlett's acquaintance with the music of the old English composers for the virginals dates to a series of recitals given by Mr. Robertson in London in 1926. A year later the two pianists were touring as a team, and apparently an idea which had come to Miss Bartlett was germinating—that here in this old music was good material for the rather scant two-piano repertory. However, the success of their recitals was so great and so lasting that it was not until the summer of 1944 that this idea bore fruit. The *Elizabethan Suite* had its first performance in Carnegie Hall, New York, on January 5, 1945. Miss Bartlett has explained that she felt that this delightful music was being lost in our day of professional performances and huge auditoriums: if played on the virginals in a large concert hall, she believed, the music would be inaudible. There is room for some argument on this point, of course, for we all know what has been done by such artists as Landowska, Kirkpatrick and Pessl. And when we come to consider recording, Miss Bartlett's argument is even less valid for obvious reasons.

This is not to say that the *Suite* as here presented is not charming. It is. And both in the treatment of the various pieces incorporated and in the performance of them there is more than a suggestion of the true and original harpsichord style of music. The selection, a good one, is as follows: *Variations on John, Come Kiss Me Now* and *Earle of Salisbury's Pavan* (Byrd); *His Conceit, A Toye, Tower Hill Jigge Tune for Two Virginals* and *His Dreame* (Farnaby); *The Fall of the Leafe* (Peerson) and *The King's Hunting Jigge* (Bull). Some of these pieces are long familiar to collectors of harpsichord recordings, but they are always good to hear again. The Robertsons play with their wonted spirit and balance, though not invariably with perfect unanimity. —P.L.M.

Voice

CHARPENTIER: *Louise—Depuis le jour*; and DEBUSSY: *L'Enfant prodigue—Recitative and Air de Lia*; sung by Dorothy Maynor (soprano), with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Victor disc 17698, price \$1.00.

▲ Originally issued in March 1941, this disc has presumably been unavailable for a time, and Victor re-issued it recently. It is not only one of Miss Maynor's best records but one in which she sings most appealingly. To the *Louise* aria she brings more conviction than any of the other ladies who have recorded it for Victor. One has to return to Mary Garden's youthful recording (not her electrical version) to hear such a note of ecstasy as Miss Maynor provides here. Her rendition of the Debussy air is no less appealing, though her voice is on the light side to attain the true intensity this selection demands. —P.G.

HARMATI: *Bluebird of Happiness*; and d'HARDELOT: *Because*; sung by Jan Peerce (tenor), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by Sylvan Levin. Victor disc 11-9007, price \$1.00.

HAYDN: *My Mother Bids Me Bind my Hair*, and *She Never Told her Love*; sung by Marian Anderson (contralto), with Franz Rupp at the piano. Victor 10 inch disc No. 10-1199, price 75c.

KIPLING SONGS: *On the Road to Mandalay* (Speaks); *Danny Deever* (Damrosch); *Gunga Din* (Spross); *Fuzzy Wuzzy* (Speaks); *Boots* (McCall); sung by Norman Cordon (bass-baritone), with Archie L. Black at the piano. Victor set M-1030, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ Not received in time for review this month.

LOVE SONGS (arr. by Alan Shulman): *Dearly Beloved* from *You Were Never Lovelier* (Kern); *Love, Come Back To Me* from *The New Moon* (Romberg); *The Man I Love* (Gershwin); *Love Walked Right In* from *Goldwyn Follies* (Gershwin); *Falling*

in *Love with Love* from *The Boys from Syracuse* (Rodgers); *I Love You from Mexican Hayride* (Porter); *I'm Falling in Love with Someone* from *Naughty Marietta* (Herbert); *Lover from Love Me Tonight* (Rodgers); sung by Risé Stevens, mezzo-soprano, with orchestra conducted by Sylvan Shulman. Columbia set M-595, four ten-inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲Several weeks ago Virgil Thomson devoted his Sunday column in the New York Herald-Tribune to a discussion of two opposing types of vocalism to be heard today. The older kind of singing, prevalent, as he dates it, in 1910, is today being challenged by a new style which is not singing in the old sense at all, since it relies for its effect not on a developed vocal mechanism capable of both flexibility and power, but rather on the ability to reduce the mechanics to a minimum and depend on the microphone and the amplifier to build up the desired amount of tone. Because of the wide differences between these two methods, which certainly should be differentiated, perhaps by using the two words *singing* and *crooning*, some of our most successful radio and movie stars have failed miserably in concert and opera, while on the other hand the best of our opera singers have not invariably appealed to overwhelming radio audiences. Mr. Thomson claims that nobody he knows has mastered both styles of vocalism.

One wonders what he would say of these new recordings of Risé Stevens, an opera singer who has been to Hollywood—one, in fact, who has co-starred with Bing Crosby in his most successful picture to date. We have had recorded samples of Miss Stevens in opera, and also in lieder, and it is a little difficult to recognize this singer of popular love songs as the same lady. For, whether or not she has mastered the mechanics and the style of crooning, it appears fairly obvious that she has here attempted to leave behind her most of her "1910" vocal technique. To my ears the result sounds careful, even affected. She has not the kind of *rubato* which characterizes Crosby and his imitators; her phrasing is rather too straight. Although her words come over clearly enough, the impression is rather of mouthing than of projection. This effect is emphasized by the recording, in which the voice is blown

up to top a lush and colorful orchestral background. —P.L.M.

SULLIVAN: *The Lost Chord*; and STEFFE: *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*: sung by Dennis Morgan (tenor), with Hollywood Presbyterian Church Choir and Orchestra, direction of William Lava. Columbia disc 7442-M, price \$1.00.

▲Mr. Morgan, a popular screen favorite, is represented here in familiar and traditional movie style. This record, in our estimation, will appeal primarily to the singer's admirers. —P.G.

A LAWRENCE TIBBETT PROGRAM:

Porgy and Bess—*I got plenty of nuttin'* (Gershwin); *Goin' Home* (Dvorak-Fisher) (disc 11-8860); *La Tosca*—*Te Deum* (Puccini); *Il Ballo in Maschera*—*Eri tu* (Verdi) (disc 11-8961); *Tannhaeuser*—*O du mein holder Abendstern* (Wagner); *On the Road to Mandalay* (Speaks) (disc 11-8962); *Merry Mount*—*'Tis an Earth Defiled* (Hanson); *The King's Henchman*—*Nay, Marcus Lay Him Down* (Taylor) (disc 11-8932); sung by Lawrence Tibbett (baritone) with orchestral accompaniment and with Metropolitan Opera Chorus in the Puccini and Taylor arias. Victor set M-1015, price \$4.50.

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▲ These are old recordings made by Mr. Tibbett in his prime. Having heard this noted American baritone on several occasions in his radio programs of this past year, in which the ravages of time were all too apparent in his singing, I find myself saddened while listening to these records which reveal him as once the possessor of one of the most beautiful voices of his time. No one who listens to his fine singing of Wolfram's hackneyed air from *Tannhaeuser* could fail to be moved by the singer's expressive yet artistic restraint. I had forgotten this recording, which was issued in October 1934, before this magazine began publication. It deserves to rank with the best recordings of this aria.

It was twenty-two years ago last month that Tibbett made his debut at the Metropolitan. For two years he sang small parts, then in January of 1925 he was assigned the part of Ford in the Metropolitan revival of *Falstaff* starring Scotti. I attended that performance and remember keenly the tremendous ovation that Tibbett got; the management at first seemed reluctant to permit him solo curtain calls but the persistence of the audience won out, and the baritone's career as a famous singing actor was launched. Tibbett has always appealed to me more as an operatic than a concert artist, and I would have preferred it had Victor made this an all operatic program. Tibbett never sang Porgy but I daresay he would have done a good job of it had tradition not decreed otherwise. His Emperor Jones was a notable characterization. He seems to relish this Heyward-Gershwin selection, which, incidentally, was recorded under the supervision of the composer. Fisher's *Goin' Home*, adopted from Dvorak's Largo from the *New World*, is not a song which endures; Tibbett does it well but I prefer to listen to him in other excerpts. The singing actor is heard to advantage in Verdi's *Eri tu*, the aria from Hanson's short-lived *Merry Mount* and the excerpt from Taylor's opera—which owed what success it had more than in part to the dignity of Tibbett's Eadgar. The aria here is the threnody he sings over the body of his friend Aethelwold, who betrayed him.

Tibbett's voice is excellently reproduced in all these discs, but when compared to the fine operatic discs of last month, they show how far ahead the art of recording has gone; moreover, the orchestral accompaniments are

by no means as good as some we have been getting of late. These pressings, however, possess better surfaces than the original releases. As a memento to a great American singer in his prime, this album should interest a lot of people. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *Rigoletto*—*Questa o quella*;
PUCCINI: *Turandot*—*Nessun dorma*;
sung by Jussi Bjoerling, tenor, with orchestra conducted by Nils Grevillius.
Victor 10-inch disc 10-1200, price 75c.

▲ As a Bjoerling admirer of long standing I must admit to disappointment in this latest disc, which, I understand from the article of Messrs. Clough and Cumming in the December ARG, is part of the tenor's 1944 series of recordings. The two sides here presented have appeared in Europe with different couplings, *Questa o quella* having been teamed with the *Barcarolle* from *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Nessun dorma* with Leoncavallo's *Mattinata*. The *Turandot* aria is a welcome addition to the lists: though frequently recorded abroad this is, so far as I can remember, its first appearance in the domestic catalogues. Like all of Puccini's tenor arias it is a remarkably effective piece of vocal writing, and it is by no means lacking the Master's distinctive human appeal. However, somehow it fails to come off here, perhaps due to over-recording. Neither in it nor in the light and graceful bit from *Rigoletto* does the tenor seem fully at ease. Bjoerling has maintained a good standard of recording in the past: I hope this disc is not typical of his most recent work.

—P.L.M.

Children's Records

CHILDREN'S SONGS AND STORIES;
Cowboy Tex Ritter. Capitol set BD-14,
four 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

STORIES FOR CHILDREN; told by Margaret O'Brien. Capitol set CC-21, three
10-inch discs, price \$2.00.

▲ These titles were omitted last month, although records were discussed.—Both albums will have an appeal for youngsters who go regularly to the movies.

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THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

115 Reed Ave.

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JANUARY, 1946

Vol. XXXII, No. 1

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